

IN THE STEPS OF JESUS

The Bible

St. John in the Wilderness

Book of Common Prayer

- Catechism – page 853
- Articles of Religion, VI – page 868
 - Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation
 - Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

Composition

- Collection of 66 books
 - Old Testament (39)
 - New Testament (27)
- Variety of literary genres
- Tanakh or Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)
 - Torah - Instruction
 - Navi'im - Prophecy
 - Kethuvim – Writings
- New Testament
 - Gospels
 - History
 - Letters
 - Apocalyptic

Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Overview

- Tells the story of Abraham and his descendants and their relationship with God
- Tells the story of the Israelites' (Abraham's descendants') sojourn and escape from Egypt
- History of the Israelites' in the land formerly known as Canaan
- History of the fall of Jerusalem, exile to Babylon, and subsequent release by the Persian Empire

Importance of Hebrew Bible to Christians

- Contains the roots of our Christian faith
- Frequently quoted by Jesus and authors of New Testament texts
- When scriptures are referenced in the New Testament (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:16), the scriptures are the Hebrew Bible

New Testament Overview

- Tells the Gospel (Good News) of the coming of Jesus the Christ
- Tells the story of the life of Jesus
 - Calling of disciples
 - Ministry in Palestine (Old Testament land of Israel)
 - Crucifixion
 - Resurrection
- Tells the story of the first Christians (followers of The Way)
- Contains record of early Christian letters

Old Testament Traditions

- Composition of OT took over 2000 years
 - Some parts of the canon date to the mid- 900's BCE
 - Portions of Torah tradition are thought to date from this time, beginning with those identified as "J"
 - "E" tradition largely complete by end of 9th century BCE
 - "D" tradition complete by end of 8th century BCE
 - Prophetic traditions were the first to be written as more or less complete units (800's BCE)
 - Exilic period a time of redaction and composition of "P" tradition
 - OT canon of 24 books recognized in 90 CE by Council of Jamnia

LXX – The Septuagint

- Greek translations of the Jewish scriptures began in the third century BCE
- Addressed the needs of Hellenistic Jews in the Diaspora
- Process of translation indicated primarily by differing order of books after the placement of Chronicles
- LXX codices differ in their placement of the 12 minor prophets
- Compare with Hebrew manuscripts
 - Custom to write all 12 minor prophets on 1 scroll
 - Started with Hosea and ended with Malachi

New Testament Traditions

- Earliest materials to be written are the letters of Paul
- First Gospel, Mark, probably dates to the mid 60's AD
- Matthew and Luke-Acts follow in the 70's and 80's AD
- Gospel of John and the letters of John along with Revelation and James among the last NT literature to be written
- 367 AD – Athanasius lists all 27 NT books in Easter letter

The Vulgate

- Jerome's (d. 420 AD) translation of the Bible into Latin
- Spent 35 years working with a rabbi to translate a preliminary MT from Hebrew to Latin
- Kept in large part the LXX order of books
- Inspired Protestants to return to the original Hebrew texts

What Made It Into the Canon

- 4 criteria used
 - Apostolic authorship
 - Adherence to orthodoxy (compliant with church teaching)
 - Used widely in Christian churches
 - Used early in church history
- End of 2nd century AD
 - Pauline epistles
 - 4 Gospels
 - 1 Peter and 1 John widely respected, but not part of collections
- Eusebius places books into 3 categories (Church History, early 4th century)
 - Accepted
 - Disputed
 - Heretical
- No council ratified a prescribed list; a process that took time
- Ultimately the books that stood the test of time made it

Why Read the Bible

- Tells the story of God – the God who desires a relationship with his people
- Teaches us how to live as we walk through our lives
 - How should we relate to God
 - How should we relate to our neighbors
- One way God still speaks to us today

How to Read the Bible

- Remember it was written by people inspired by God
- As a collection of books, the Bible contains a variety of literary genres
 - Ask what sort of material are you reading? Is it history, poetry, a letter... ?
- Try reading it in different ways
 - Reading an entire book in one sitting can give different insights than reading one verse or paragraph meditatively
 - Both ways are beneficial
 - Read the Bible with others (in community)
- Ask questions
 - What does the text say?
 - What does the text mean?
 - Is there a person in the text that I can relate to?
 - Do I sense God asking me to do something?
- Pray before you read for understanding and after you read, take your thoughts and questions about to text to God
- Use Bible dictionaries and other helps
- Read the Bible again